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An address to all
honorably discharged
soldiers in the loyal states.





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Book 415



AN ADDRESS

TO ALL HONORABLY DISCHARGED

Soldiers and Sailors

IN THE LOYAL STATES, FROM THE

SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' NATIONAL UNION LEAGUE

OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

To the Honorably discharged Soldiers and Sailors of the United States, greeting:

We address the honorably discharged soldiers and sailors of the Union army and navy of our country upon the importance of organizing leagues throughout the States, having for their object the maintenance of their rights and best interests, and the fostering of that heroic spirit which led them forth to battle in a sacred cause, and the diffusing and practising of those great patriotic truths and lessons evolved by the success of their efforts.

It is admitted that the rebellion just ended was one of the most gigantic recorded in the history of the world, its inception and prosecution the most wicked and diabolical, and its success would have entailed consequences the most calamitous to our country.

The successful overthrow of this monstrous combination of wicked men has secured the perpetuity of our republican form of government; established security to our commercial, agricultural, and mechanical interests, and blessings to us as a nation not exceeded by those obtained for us by our forefathers.

These great results have been accomplished by the individual and combined efforts of the Union soldier and sailor, and it is important that every man who has served his country should faithfully keep this fact in view.

It has cost the lives of many of our comrades; made vacant many a chair at the family board; and widows and orphans are now mourning the loss of their protectors, while many who went forth from the family circle in all the strength and pride of manhood have returned broken in health, their manly forms crippled and maimed; and all have endured hardships and dangers unparalleled in history.

It behooves us to use our influence to see that the crime which has inflicted so much misery and woe upon the country shall not be lost sight

of, and the sacrifices of her defenders be held in light esteem: and it remains for us to prevent the charge that "republics are ungrateful" from becoming verified in fact.

We must stand by each other now, as we did upon many a battle-field, that no enemy to our interests shall overwhelm us.

We must not prostitute our honor by begging recognition as the saviors of the country, but we must persistently and respectfully demand this.

It is our birthright, which we hold of highest value, and to be yielded for no consideration. There are reasons why we should organize to maintain our rights, and observe the utmost vigilance. There are thousands in every State who did not go in defence of their country from unmanly motives. They are wanting in patriotism and courage. To those it will be an object to dim the glory of the achievements of the soldier, that their recreancy to their duty may not be so conspicuous. Others, whose sympathies were with the traitors and their cause, will make it an object to have little credit attached to the service of the soldier or sailor, that the heinousness of their treason may not be so apparent. Nor can we overlook the professional politicians who found it to their interests to advocate our cause and bespatter us with praise while their ends were subserved, but who in their schemes of self-aggrandizement will endeavor to make a soldier's service of secondary importance, fearful lest his claims upon a grateful country may overshadow theirs.

Every rebel soldier, and particularly those who have been the very front and offending of this war, have an interest against those who fought for the Union. As our cause and services increase in the estimation of the public, that of the rebels become more dishonorable. If they increase in favor and can make it appear that it is not so bad after all to have been a participant in this unholy rebellion, then it will appear less commendable to have fought for the maintenance of the Union. These are some of the influences that it will require all the combined efforts we can command to counteract. We would not disguise the fact that they are formidable, but we have had formidable combinations to contend against before, with what result let Vicksburg, Gettysburg, and Richmond tell. The same principles are involved. We claim our position as a right due us; those we have to contend against are the enemies of our country and of her defenders, and it will require the same devotedness to our interests, the same degree of self-denial and determination not to be discouraged by seeming delay in the accomplishment of our purpose, nor to be disheartened by occasional reverses, that we evinced in overthrowing the enemies of our Government.

We must not be turned aside by questions of creed or party. These were represented in the Union army, and did not affect its unity of action or purpose. If our success has accrued to the present benefit of the Republican party, as a party, we could not have done our duty less faithfully if the Democratic party, as a party, had received the advantage. We must fight to keep before the people "that treason is a crime;" that all men engaged in the rebel cause were traitors to their country, and forfeited their rights and privileges as citizens: that what they did in

its support was damnable, diabolical wickedness, and should find no apologist; and that, while we grant them the boon of life, they shall not be restored to positions of honor and trust by any influence which we possess, and this shall apply to all aiders and abettors of treason wherever they exist as ulcers upon the body politic. We must keep before the people, not boastfully nor arrogantly, but with dignified persistence, that we are the people that saved this country, and but for whom this fair fabric would have been crushed, and anarchy reigned supreme.

But for us, all the institutions of learning, every enterprize tending to ameliorate the condition of our people, and advance the great interests of our country, would have been swept away. We need but remain faithful to each other and combat the classes before enumerated. There are thousands of patriotic citizens in every county of the States of our Union who have always appreciated our services, and given us the meed of praise due us, and who stood by us and our families while we were doing battle for our homes and firesides. If we remain true and faithful as citizens, as we have been to our country as soldiers, we can always calculate upon their co-operation. The earnest and laborious attention of Soldiers' and Sailors' Leagues, wherever established, should be given to gathering the names and facts of every man's military history, of that particular locality, who has faithfully served in this war, and sacredly preserve the record. The families of those who have died, or have been killed, should receive the especial and fostering attention of the surviving men of the army and navy. If this is not done as a sacred duty by such organization of soldiers and sailors, many a brave man's wife and children will suffer. We owe it our fallen comrades to attend to this matter.

The patriotic people of the loyal States, men and women, did their part nobly during the war, and merit the lasting gratitude of every soldier, and their continued co-operation can confidently be expected in the future; but it becomes our special duty to look to the welfare of those of our own household of braves, and add all in our power to their comfort. The war has demonstrated that the support of most value to the soldier and sailor, while battling for his country, did not come from those who were actuated by political motives or self-advancement, but from the patriotic citizens of our country, who always came up in the hour of our nation's trials. Let us prove ourselves worthy of the continued confidence and esteem of these citizens, and by a calm, dignified and combined demand for the hire of which the laborer is worthy, await its payment, ever keeping in our hearts the motto, "Our country, now and forever, one and inseparable."

The discharged soldiers and sailors, temporary residents of Washington, D. C., representing nearly every state in the Union, have already formed themselves into a league, and are actively at work to promote the soldiers' and sailors' interests. We respectfully urge and invite our comrades in every section of the country to form themselves into similar leagues and effect a speedy organization, with a view to the calling of a national convention of soldiers and sailors at an early day, who shall determine the character, aims and object of this league, mould and estab-

llsh its form of government, and give it an influence and importance that will forever establish it upon a firm foundation.

We respectfully solicit a full, free and candid interchange of views with every soldier and sailor of our country, and to this end we invite correspondence from every one upon every subject that can be of interest to the soldier and the sailor and that would be proper subject for the attention of a national Convention. We trust every soldier and sailor will give us his views upon any subject he thinks will be of advantage in accomplishing the objects we have in view. We ask this in order that we, being located at the seat of the General Government, may become acquainted with the views and demands of our comrades, and thus be able the more intelligently to labor for their interests. We will cheerfully send our constitution to all Leagues in process of organization upon application by letter. All communications will be addressed to William Stringer, Esq., Corresponding Secretary Soldiers' and Sailors' National Union League, Washington, D. C.

Comrades, we commend this work to you. It is for you to say whether we shall be felt as a power in the land. Individual effort is useless, but a well-established combination, representing nearly one million freemen who bared their bosoms to the fire of the enemy, and risked their lives that the nation might live, will be entitled to consideration, and wield an influence that will be a sure guarantee that our rights will be respected, and our demands receive attention. Let us strive to elevate the cause in which we have been engaged, and thus elevate still higher the character of the Union soldier and sailor, so that it may be handed down to our children and posterity, side by side with the Revolutionary hero, as the synonym of all that is just, brave, honorable and patriotic. To this end, we invite your hearty co-operation and commend to your attention the views set forth in this address, and trust the day may not be far distant when we shall see the aims and objects thus set forth practically carried out.

L. EDWIN DUDLEY,
W. L. BAER,
H. C. GROSSMAN,
C. H. MADISON,
WILLIAM A. SHORT,
WILLIAM STRINGER,
JAMES CROSS,

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22, 1865.

Committee on Address.

If favorable to the sentiments of the above address, please publish it in your paper.

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